

lost on my amendment last week. But I am not going to give up. The defeat of the amendment on mortgage foreclosure is postponing the inevitable. The inevitable is that we are going to have to reckon with the financial institutions in this country and the fact that they do not have the national interest in their hearts when it comes to some of these basic decisions that need to be made.

It is time for us to work with the will of the people of this country and to establish some order that gives working families and homeowners across America a fighting chance.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, before the Senator from Illinois leaves the floor, I thank him. He has been a voice, indeed, for people who don't have a voice. He has done that throughout his career both here and in the House. It is a pleasure listening to him.

I believe I asked unanimous consent to have my statement on S. 454 printed in the RECORD immediately after our legislation is called up this afternoon, and with the permission of Senator MCCAIN, I ask unanimous consent to have his statement also printed in the RECORD at that time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). The Senator from New York is recognized.

HELPING MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Madam President, I rise today to talk about a bill that I will be introducing called the Elimination of the Single Parent Tax Act.

When I came to the Senate, I reflected often on some of the work I did in the House. As a Congresswoman, I spent a lot of time in my community doing "Congress on York corner." I would go to a local book shop or a senior center or a grocery store and meet with folks and listen to their concerns. I would try very hard to turn those concerns into legislative ideas.

One of the last ones I did as a House Member was in Warren County. A woman said to me:

Congresswoman, I received a bill from the Federal Government and I need you to do something about it.

She was very visibly upset. She also said to me:

This is a bill for \$25. I am a single mom and I earn about \$20,000 a year. I have 3 boys. The Federal Government is billing me because I receive child support. I cannot handle another bill, and while \$25 may not seem like a lot to you, it is to me, because \$25 is what I spend for my boys for lunch for a week. Please do something about this.

I looked into the issue, and I found out it was part of the Bush administration's Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. It occurred to me, why in the world are

we trying to balance the Federal budget on the backs of single parents, particularly those who need that money to provide for their kids? On average, 30 percent of the income that single parents receive is from their child support. So it goes a long way to providing basic needs for their kids, whether it is for diapers, baby formula, food, education, or health care. So I wrote this bill to address this problem. I think it should not be paid by the single parents, or the States, and that, in fact, the overhead should be covered.

This penalty raises only \$65 million per year. That is a cost I think we should include as we begin to look at the Deficit Reduction Act this year.

Interestingly enough, in the Deficit Reduction Act, under the Bush administration, they also cut more than \$4 billion of incentive payments the Federal Government had made to States to help encourage them to improve child support programs. This funding is crucial to how our single parents provide for their kids.

As we begin to look at Mother's Day, which is right around the corner and it is a time when we all reflect on how much our mothers have done for us and how much we love them, I think we as Federal legislators should do what we can do to protect our mothers and to stand up for them and help them take care of their kids.

If we can pass this bill, it will make a difference for many families in New York State. There are more than 200,000 families who are affected by this tax. For example, over 13,000 single parents in western New York; over 14,000 single parents in Rochester and the Finger Lakes region; over 11,000 single parents in central New York; over 8,000 single parents in the southern tier; over 18,000 single parents in the capital region; over 7,000 single parents in the north country; and over 25,000 single parents in the Hudson Valley.

Right now there are 27 States across the country that are charging this single parent penalty tax. This could make a difference all across our great Nation.

I am going to work very hard with the Finance Committee chairman to strike this fee from the Deficit Reduction Act when it is reviewed by the committee in the coming months.

As we reflect on Mother's Day, we have to do our part to make a difference for our mothers. One other issue that is near and dear to my heart that will make a difference for our moms is the Paycheck Fairness Act. If we look at the statistics, it is pretty unbelievable. For every dollar a man earns, a woman earns only 78 cents. If you are a woman of color, it is even worse. If you are an African-American woman, you will earn 62 cents. If you are Latino, you will earn 53 cents. That is unacceptable and unfair because when women earn more money, they can bring more money home to their families and better provide for their

kids. All the statistics show when women earn their fair share, children have better access to education, health care, and opportunities.

As we celebrate Mother's Day, let's do something for our mothers and fight for them so they can protect and provide for their children.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ENSIGN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ENSIGN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

CELEBRATING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF WEST PREP

Mr. ENSIGN. Madam President, I rise to honor the leaders, visionaries, students, faculty, and the parents at West Prep in North Las Vegas, NV. At a time when disappointing and depressing news seems to fill our days, there is a light of promise beaming from a very unlikely place in my State.

Just a few short years ago, the writing was on the chalkboard for West Middle School. The school was persistently dangerous and consistently the lowest performing middle school in southern Nevada. Madam President, 100 percent of the students are from low-income households, and 92 percent of them are Hispanic or Black. These children had not just been left behind, their futures were sort of swept under the rug for someone else to deal with at another time.

Fortunately, there are educators who will never settle for that. Associate superintendent Dr. Ed Goldman asked if he could take the school over. He hired a young, brash, hungry principal named Dr. Mike Barton and made sure the school had empowerment-level funding. He also gave Dr. Barton tremendous reign over the school. That was in April 2006.

Today, West Prep is a study in education innovation. They extended the school day and provided a third semester as summer school. Forty percent of the children have voluntarily signed up for this summer school. Now they have begun a transition to a full K-12 campus. There is afterschool tutoring. The students wear uniforms. There is a newcomer track for students new to the United States. Science and math classes are divided by gender. There is a law enforcement class that collaborates with the FBI and a Men Mentoring Men program, both of which are keeping kids out of the dean's office. Students feel safe now when they go to this school. Most importantly, they are finally learning.

I had the opportunity to visit this school and observe the students throughout the school. When an adult walks into the classrooms, all of the children stand, say good morning, sit back down, and continue their lesson. They are taught to respect elders.

When I visited that school, I had the opportunity to observe a chemistry class. They were performing a chemistry experiment. I asked one of the students—she was an African-American young lady who had attended the school before Dr. Barton took over: What is the biggest difference between then and now? What was happening now, as opposed to before educators shook things up? She had a very simple reply. She said: Now I get to learn.

It seems like such a simple thing, to be able to learn, almost shocking that those kinds of words would come out of her mouth. But these students had been robbed of that opportunity. We are the greatest Nation on earth, and we have not figured out how to make it so all our kids can learn. Give a child an education—an education that teaches and inspires—and there is no limit to their potential. The test results at West Prep are proof.

This school has seen phenomenal test score growth. Recently, we learned how phenomenal that growth is. Three years ago, only 17 percent at what was then West Middle School could read or perform math at grade level. Only 17 percent. Today, 97 percent of juniors are proficient in reading, 73 percent are proficient in math, and 64 percent are proficient in science. About 80 percent of the juniors were enrolled at the school 3 years ago when Dr. Barton took over. Isn't that amazing?

I am so proud of what Dr. Goldman and Dr. Barton have done, but I am especially proud of the students, the teachers, and the parents at West Prep. Together they have turned the tide. Every day we see at West Prep what quality education can accomplish.

There is still work to do, but there is a can-do feeling that has spread throughout the community, and you feel it when you walk onto the campus. See, Dr. Barton was given freedom to lead that school. He isn't tied down by bureaucracy. He spends most of his time in the school, when a lot of the other principals today go to school district meetings, spend time on bureaucracy. The other thing is, he can fire teachers who are not performing. In fact, when he came onboard, he replaced a majority of the teachers. Remember, he is recruiting teachers into one of, what most people would describe in southern Nevada, the least desirable places to live or teach in southern Nevada. But now he has a team in place that he knows will motivate his students and help them reach their potential. This formula is working.

In 2006, nobody imagined this school could ever reach the level of success it has in such a short period of time. Instead, the school will graduate its first senior class next year. It is raising the

bar every day as it shakes up traditional education. Most importantly, the students of West Prep are learning and reaching their full potential.

Congratulations, West Prep. We are all so proud of you and what you have accomplished.

Madam President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DODD. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXPRESSIONS OF APPRECIATION

Mr. DODD. Madam President, I am going to read a unanimous consent request in a moment, but before then, because I don't have any time at the conclusion of the last vote before the vote on final passage, I wish to take a minute to thank the majority leader, Senator REID, for making it possible for this bill to be before the Senate this week. I am grateful to him and his staff.

I thank my staff, who have done a terrific job: Jonathan Miller, principally, from my Banking Committee staff, as well as many others from the Banking Committee staff who worked very hard to bring this bill together and to create the opportunity for our colleagues to offer as many as 20 different amendments, most of them in direct relation to the bill but others to add items which will strengthen the bill. I want to specifically thank Colin McGinnis, Beth Cooper, Dean Shahinian, Julie Chon, Brian Filipowich, Misha Mintz-Roth, Deborah Katz, Matt Green, Amy Widestrom, Ella Humphry, and James Bair.

I thank Senator SHELBY and his staff as well—Bill Duhnke, Mark Oesterle, Andrew Olmem, Peggy Kuhn, Hester Pierce, and Jim Johnson. We worked very cooperatively. While there were some differences of opinion on a couple matters involved with this legislation, overall we had great cooperation, as we have had over the past 2 years I have been chairman of the committee. I am grateful to him and his staff for the cooperation they have with my office.

We have a strong committee of some 23 members. Almost a quarter of this body serves on the Banking Committee. They add great value to the process. I am grateful to them.

This is an important matter, not just for financial institutions but, more importantly—I say that with some caution—to open up lines of credit. We need to have an increase in deposit insurance. We need to have an increase in the borrowing authority. Sheila Bair, for whom most of us have great respect, is Chairperson of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and is doing a wonderful job. This bill includes that.

We have provisions in here to provide a safe harbor for servicers—a key component of the legislation designed to get servicers to pursue loan modifications more aggressively. I thank Senator MARTINEZ of Florida for his contribution to this provision.

I see Senator ENSIGN in the Chamber, who, working with Senator BOXER, added value to this bill as well, making it possible for homeowners to determine who actually holds their mortgages.

Senator GRASSLEY added contributions, as well, to accountability and transparency. Senator REED of Rhode Island has done a great deal in providing greater flexibility in terms of warrants, which I think is going to strengthen the bill as well. Senator REED also contributed groundbreaking legislation to fight homelessness along with Senator BOND.

Invariably, when I start doing this without a note in front of me, I am going to forget some Member and their contribution to the bill. So I will reserve the ability to amend these remarks to make sure I include others who have contributed to this legislation.

But this bill includes the kinds of steps we need to be taking in order to get our economy moving, to increase that confidence and optimism so critical to economic recovery.

Madam President, 10,000 foreclosures a day is unacceptable. This bill will now provide the opportunity for us to be able to reduce that number. Some estimates are that as many as 1.7 million to 2 million homeowners could be positively affected by what we are doing today with this legislation. That is no small number when you consider the total numbers that could be adversely affected. Our hope is that will do just that, to make that kind of a difference, in addition to the other matters I have already mentioned that were added by amendment or included in the underlying bill. So while this is not going to change everything, it is not going to solve every problem, it is a major step in the right direction in terms of this economic recovery we are all interested in.

There is not a Member in this Chamber—regardless of the differences we may have on how to get there—who does not want to do everything in their power to see to it that our country once again has that sense of confidence that has been the hallmark of America for more than two centuries. Certainly, we are going through a difficult time. Individually, people understand it; they know it. We have an administration under President Obama that is working hard to do everything possible to see to it that we move in the right direction.

So I am grateful to my colleagues who have shown a lot of patience over the last several days to get to this point. I thank them for that. Senator KERRY, Senator CASEY, Senator FEINGOLD—I mentioned Senator ENSIGN—